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AUTHOR Droege, Robert G.
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ABSTRACT

The alternative suggested is comprised of three elements: 1) Working toward changes in attitudes of people and institutions to directly attack discriminatory applications of tests; 2) Emphasizing test validation and development by new test instruments oriented to the needs of disadvantaged applicants; and, 3) Eliminating discriminatory selection procedures as stated in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. (MS)

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Robert C. Droege

Alternatives to a Moratorium on Testing

Last year the APGA Senate passed a resolution on the possibility of a moratorium on testing. The Senate said three things:

1. Tests are used by some so as to limit job and educational opportunity of the disadvantaged.
2. Something should be done about that by informing people about the limitations of these tests, and by making up new tests.
3. Unless there is progress in this situation in one year, a proposal for a moratorium on testing would be presented.

I think that the resolution focuses too much attention on the test. It says that something should be done about the tests. And that's probably right. But it does not say enough about what should be done about the people and institutions that decide who gets hired and who gets educated.

And isn't the real crux of the problem -- people and their attitudes, not the tests and their deficiencies. Tests are not biased, but people are. A test never screened anyone out of a job. But interviewers following company policy do. A test never limited anyone's educational opportunity. But college admissions officials have. Tests can be improved to make them fairer for use with the disadvantaged. But users of the test can still discriminate unfairly.

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A moratorium on testing would eliminate a convenient scapegoat. But it would not eliminate bias, or ignorance, or bad judgment, or malevolence on the part of the individual screener, or the institution that tells him what to screen for. The fact is that some personnel interviewers and college admissions officers do use poor judgment and some are biased. Take away the test, but the poor judgment and bias remain. The fact is that some companies provide for use of tests to deliberately screen out members of minority groups. Take away the test, but the screening out will continue through use of other devices designed to achieve the same ends.

What would be the effect of a moratorium on testing? In those instances where there is organization pressure to screen out disadvantaged and non-white applicants, the inappropriate test will most certainly be replaced with another technique of equal or greater effectiveness. In those cases the elimination of the test would have essentially no affect on the outcome of selection decisions. In those instances where there is no organization pressure to screen out members of minority groups, the effect a moratorium on testing would have depends on the qualifications of the screener. If the screener is not well qualified, he will misuse other information about applicants and make selection decisions essentially as inappropriately as he did when he had the test. Result: no net gain toward objective of increasing job opportunities of minority group members. If the screener is well qualified in his job, a moratorium on testing will take away from him access to information that would be useful. Result: a net loss in achieving the objective of selecting qualified minority group members.

As an alternative to a moratorium on testing I would like to suggest working on the broader and more fundamental problem of institutional change. Through education and pressure, organizations should be encouraged to abandon restrictive selection policies and to develop in their place positive programs of selecting, training and educating disadvantaged individuals. And they could be encouraged to increase the qualifications of those personnel responsible for selection. To the extent that commitment to these goals could be obtained, we would find that more appropriate tests would be developed and installed, and there would be less misuse of the results.

Consider the case of my own organization -- the employment service. I'm proud to be part of that organization because it has responded to new challenges (or pressures) and has let itself become educated to new priorities in serving minority groups. At one time the employment service was primarily oriented to the employer's needs for qualified workers. But a passive policy which screens into work only those currently qualified and neglects the rest of the potential work force is both unfair and unresponsive to the needs of the Nation. The employment service, as a deliverer of manpower services to poverty-oriented programs, had to assume an active role in serving those in need. But you must understand that this redirection of effort has not come about without a lot of agony and indecision. And <u>pressure</u>.

In the employment service, tests have always been an important part of the process of determining occupational qualification. In 1963, about the time the ES began to think in terms of helping disadvantaged applicants

obtain suitable employment, the ES could have abandoned tests as devices which screen out disadvantaged individuals.

But tests were not abandoned. Quite the contrary. One of the effects of the ES reorientation was innovation in development of new assessment techniques. Our new Nonreading Aptitude Test Battery, new pretesting orientation techniques, new achievement tests of basic skills, and work sample techniques -- all these happened as a result of the new focus on the needs of the disadvantaged. The point is this -- that we are now in much better position to assess the potentialities and needs of disadvantaged clients with the tools that we have developed over the past seven years than we would have been if we had abandoned tests in 1963. The reason is that a moratorium on testing in 1963 would also have killed the test development program that led to the new techniques helpful in employability development of the disadvantaged.

2nd suggestion

Now I would like to describe some of the new testing techniques developed by the ES during the last several years -- techniques that have special relevance for use with the disadvantaged. I will summarize these techniques first and then go into a bit more detail.

The major product of the ES test development program prior to 1963 was the General Aptitude Test Battery, used in connection with employment selection and vocational counseling. It is the best validated occupational aptitude battery in existence. The GATB consists of 12 tests measuring 9 basic vocational aptitudes. It can be administered in about 2½ hours and indicates an individual's potentialities in a wide variety of specific occupations and in families of occupations with similar aptitude

requirements. A continuing program of occupational validation of the GATB is conducted by the employment service to extend its coverage to additional occupations.

During the last eight years, a major effort has been made to develop new and improved instruments to meet the needs of new manpower programs concerned with disadvantaged individuals. A nonreading alternate of the GATB was developed. A screening procedure was devised to help ensure that GATB tests were appropriate for individuals to whom they were to be administered. Pretesting orientation techniques were developed to be used with individuals with limited test-taking experience.

Basic occupational literacy tests of reading and arithmetic skills are being developed. They will assist in making appropriate referrals to literacy training programs and in determining the type and amount of training in these basic skills which an individual needs in order to meet the requirements of specific occupations and occupational training. For employment service applicants who are so severely disadvantaged that conventional testing is not feasible, work sample techniques are being tried out which will give inexperienced individuals the "feel" of activities associated with various kinds of work.

Research is continuing on the GATB. The number of specific occupations for which the GATB has been validated has risen to more than 400, including many newly emergent occupations. Special research studies are in progress to determine the effectiveness of the GATB and other ES tests.

Now more detail

The GATB has been a valuable tool in the measurement of aptitudes of job applicants and candidates for occupational training. However, many of the hard core unemployed who need vocational counseling and remedial services to help them become employable do not have sufficient literacy skills to take all of the GATB tests.

This problem led the employment service to work toward development of a nonreading edition of the GATB for use with the educationally deficient. The GATB was used as the model in this development for two reasons:

1. The GATB measures the important vocationally significant aptitudes. This has been demonstrated through factor analyses, correlations with other tests and occupational validation studies (U.S. Department of Labor, 1967).
2. The GATB has been validated extensively against occupational criteria. The occupational norms developed in these studies provide a ready-made basis for interpreting scores on a nonreading edition of the GATB.

The research was initiated in 1963 and progressed through the stages of test construction, item analysis, preliminary tryout, validation and standardization studies.

The Nonreading Aptitude Test Battery resulting from this research is being released for operational use this spring. The new battery of aptitude tests for use with the disadvantaged consists of eight new tests and six of the GATB tests. Total administration time is about 3½ hours, about an hour longer than the GATB. Although we anticipate that the major use of the new battery will be in the employment service, other

organizations concerned with counseling disadvantaged adults may find the tests useful.

We look at this research as only a first step in a continuing effort to develop and refine aptitude measurement of the disadvantaged. Just as the GATB becomes more valuable as additional validation data are collected, the usefulness of the Nonreading Aptitude Test Battery will increase as additional research is done on them. At this point in the research, we have developed an aptitude test battery that (1) is oriented to the capabilities of the educationally disadvantaged and (2) provides measures underlying the occupationally oriented GATB. However, much more needs to be done to refine these measures and to validate them against training and job success of disadvantaged individuals.

One thing that our test research on disadvantaged individuals has shown clearly is the critical importance of pretesting orientation. In 1966 we asked State employment services to observe the behavior of disadvantaged persons taking the experimental nonreading aptitude tests. Typical observations were (1) many did not report for testing; (2) examinees often became confused but hesitated to ask questions; (3) many marked answers randomly; (4) some deliberately skipped pages to finish quickly. There was consensus that the disadvantaged were anxious, easily embarrassed, easily discouraged, sensitive to possible reactions of others to their behavior, and easily disturbed. Three major areas of pretesting orientation needed were identified:

1. An introduction to the purpose of testing. Orientation is needed to show the examinee how testing will be of use to him in job or training placement. An understanding of the purpose of testing should help motivate examinees to do their best on the test.

2. Practice test taking. The manipulation of test materials, working problems similar to those in the test, and practice in pacing work to time limits should build confidence in ability to take the test.
3. Suggestions on how to take tests. Middle-class persons have built up a store of information about tests and test taking techniques (test wiseness) which allows them to use their time efficiently, avoid errors and detect cues to right answers. Disadvantaged persons have had little positive experience with tests. Development of their test-wiseness would put them on a more competitive footing with others.

Several State employment services have developed tailormade pretesting orientation materials in these areas. So far, three pretesting orientation techniques have been developed for national use. One is a booklet on "Doing Your Best on Aptitude Tests" and it is on public sale at the Government Printing Office for 15¢. A very popular item, widely used in the ES and elsewhere, it is a GPO bestseller. A second technique, "Pretesting Orientation Exercises," is a miniature GATB. It provides practice on tests like those in the GATB. A third technique "Pretesting Orientation on the Purpose of Testing" is a group orientation device.

Among the disadvantaged are those who have great difficulty relating to any formal test situation. For these, work sample assessment techniques may be useful.

Work samples are standardized job performance tasks designed for use in developing the employability of disadvantaged individuals. The work sample technique consists of the work samples per se, a structured environment in which they are performed, and evaluations of the client's behavior based on observations. The work samples take about two weeks to administer. They provide the individual and his vocational counselor with a common basis for discussion, provide a basis for evaluation of the individual's occupational potentials, and provide the individual with a basis for developing insights into areas of interests, aptitudes, and motivation. Although the work sample technique is appropriate for any applicant as a simulated job try-out experience, it is particularly useful with disadvantaged clients having histories of failure in school.

The tasks selected as work samples are simulations of activities that would be encountered on a regular job. Standard tools and equipment such as screwdrivers, saws, adding machines, typewriters, needles and thread, soldering guns, pipe couplers, blouse patterns, and many other work-a-day items are used. The work-sampling environment is a typical factory setting with work benches or a business office and its equipment. The work samples range in complexity from very simple, structured operations to difficult activities involving symbolic reasoning and abstract conceptualization. They are derived from activities performed in competitive industry and are representative of a wide variety of interrelated functions such as psychomotor coordination, spatial relations, etc. Because they are not different from the kind of work a potential employee would be required to perform in an ordinary job, the experience is less threatening and more meaningful to a disadvantaged and handicapped population. In addition, the administration of such work

samples in an industrial setting maximizes the usefulness of the observations.

The use of the work sample technique for the disadvantaged was investigated by an experimental and demonstration project involving 268 jobless persons. It was funded by the Labor Department in a slum area in north Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Jewish Employment and Vocational Service (JEVS) conducted the experiment with a grant of $141,782 including $13,000 for allowances to the people who took part. A cooperating agency was the North Philadelphia Human Resources Development (HRD) Center of the Pennsylvania State Employment Service.

Of the 268 taking part in the experiment, 107 ~~was~~ were referred by their counselors to jobs, 57 to rehabilitation services, and 43 were placed in a job training programs. No immediate results could be obtained for the remaining 61 or 23 percent as the HRD counselors felt that further evaluation was required. Applicants were observed and evaluated on work attitudes, accuracy of performance, promptness in reporting to work, learning speed, acceptance of authority, and other work-related behaviors.

The technique had a high degree of acceptance among the participants enabling vocational counselors to better understand and communicate with them.

Based on the comparative experience of an experimental and control group, the work sample technique:

-- Makes easier the development of vocational objectives better suited to the applicant's abilities and potentials.

-- Boosts the applicant's chances to be referred to a wider range of job openings, to get a job on the first referral, and to hold and adjust to a job or training position.

-- Helps the counselor to identify more readily the need for giving the applicant supportive services.

-- Enables counselors to estimate for employers the potential for learning and the likely stability of individuals out of work a long time or with no work experience whatsoever.

-- Gives the disadvantaged person more confidence by helping him understand his ability to work and to learn.

Based on these preliminary findings, the employment service is now evaluating the technique as an employment service operation in 12 cities. This evaluation will consist of comparing two groups of applicants -- one group of people who do the work samples and a matched control group of people who do not do them. The purpose of the study is to determine if the use of work samples in addition to the traditional counseling techniques improve employability.

Research is in progress to develop a series of USTES tests in basic reading and arithmetic skills to be called the Basic Occupational Literacy Test (BOLT), which will meet these criteria.

The BOLT will have content, time limits, and administration procedures especially designed to be appropriate for use with educationally deficient adults and older youth in the USTES context. In addition to norms expressed in terms of General Educational Development, norms will also be developed which will indicate the reading and arithmetic skill levels required for success in specific occupations and occupational training. Basic norms will be based upon a sample representative of all individuals in the United States 18 and over with 11 or fewer years of

completed education. This base population, which includes about 54 million persons, was chosen because it reasonably approximates the educationally deficient group for whom achievement tests would be used. The characteristics of this population in terms of the relevant variables of age, sex, minority group status, and geographic region as well as education can be precisely defined in terms of available Census data.

Two types of achievement test scales, each with a number of alternate forms, will be developed for the BOLT:

1. Wide-Range Scale. A very short scale, consisting of Vocabulary and Arithmetic Computation items, which can be administered in approximately 10 minutes in the interview situation to provide preliminary estimates of counselees' reading and arithmetic levels.
2. Survey Scales. Will yield subscores on Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Arithmetic Computation, and Arithmetic Reasoning.

major feature of the BOLT will be the availability of norms indicating the minimum levels of reading and arithmetic skills required to undertake specific occupations and vocational training. Knowledge of actual requirements, as identified through research, should promote the employment of the disadvantaged by reducing the reliance of employers on artificial requirements such as high school graduation.

Considerable attention has been given to ensuring that the BOLT administration procedures are effective. Procedures have been written, tried out with a number of groups of disadvantaged examinees like those forwhom BOLT is intended, and revised on the basis of the tryout results.

Research to develop operational forms of the Wide-Range and Survey Scales has been completed. Research to develop norms for specific occupations and vocational training will be performed as appropriate samples become available.

If we are to have a moratorium on testing, let us make it selective. Let's eliminate testing or other selection devices, but only those which are not performance related. Let's keep those that are performance related as allies in the fight against discrimination. Let's follow and support the reasoned approach of the Guidlines on Employment Selection Procedures, published by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission last August. The Guidlines condemn the use of selection devices that are not job related. They applaud proper use of job related tests in selection. To quote from the statement of purpose of the Guidlines:

> "The Guidlines are based on the belief that , properly validated and standardized, employee selection procedures can significantly contribute to the implementation of non-discriminatory policies, as ~~required~~ required by Title VII."

This selective approach, differentiating the discriminatory from the non-discriminatory selection procedure, is strongly supported by the Supreme Court in its March 18, 1971 ruling in the case of Willie S. Griggs v. Duke Power Company. In that case the Supreme Court ruled against use of the Wonderlie Personnel Test and the requirement of a high school diploma for selection in the Dan River Plant - not because of the techniques used themselves - but because it could not be demonstrated that they were related to performance ~~with~~ jobs in question. The following quote from the concluding

paragraphs of opinion makes the point:

> "Nothing in the Act precludes the use of testing or measuring procedures; obviously they are useful. What Congress has forbidden is giving these devices and mechanisms controlling force unless they are demonstrably a reasonable measure of job performance. Congress has not commanded that the less qualified be preferred over the better qualified simply because of minority origins. Far from disparaging job qualifications as such, Congress has made such qualifications the controlling factor, so that race, religion, nationality, and sex become irrelevant. What Congress has commanded is that any tests used must measure the person for the job and not the person in the abstract."

This approach - emphasis on development and use of job related tests - will have a far better payoff for minority groups than a moratorium on testing.

To summarize, I would suggest as an alternative to a moratorium on testing an approach with these three elements:

1. A concentration on working toward changes in attitudes of people and institutions. This would be a direct attack on discriminatory applications of tests.
2. An emphasis on test validation and development by new test instruments oriented to the needs of disavantaged applicants.
3. An elimination of discrimimatory selection procedures as provided by law under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.